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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPKOUNSC](#) [UNSC](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: MINISTER CONVOKES AMBASSADOR OVER COTE D'IVOIRE  
UNSC NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 179974

Classified By: Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton. Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: Cabinet Minister Girardin convoked the Ambassador October 31 to urge U.S. support for the French draft Security Council resolution on Cote d'Ivoire, pleading that France was in a very difficult situation. After taking into account core U.S. objections, the draft now represented the "bare minimum" for France, although Girardin was prepared to authorize a final concession in Op 4 in order to preclude any interpretation of juridical overreach. A split vote in the Security Council could sink the Ivoirian peace process and provoke renewed civil war. Girardin asked the U.S. not to abandon France. With elections coming up in France, Girardin voiced concern that the French public could grow critical of the costly and arguably ineffectual deployment of Operation Licorne in Cote d'Ivoire and call for withdrawal of French troops. Comment: This was the first time that the French Government formally convoked the Ambassador since his arrival in 2005. End Comment and Summary.

¶2. (C) Brigitte Girardin, Minister-Delegate for Cooperation, Development and Francophonie, convoked the U.S. and UK ambassadors separately on October 31 to urge support for the draft Security Council resolution on Cote d'Ivoire. Girardin underlined that France was in a very difficult situation. The draft, as submitted "in blue," took into account the core objections of the U.S. and UK delegations, she said. The draft now represented only a very slight improvement over SCR 1633 (2005) and was the "bare minimum" as far as France was concerned. If adopted, President Gbagbo would perceive the draft's lack of substance, but France, through the media, would nonetheless play up the SC resolution to the hilt in order to bolster PM Konan Banny's efforts to advance the electoral calendar.

¶3. (C) France feared abstentions by the U.S., UK, Russia and China. A split vote in the Security Council could have dire consequences, she warned, effectively sinking the credibility of the Ivoirian peace process. Gbagbo would proclaim his victory over the Security Council. Opposition elements and rebel elements would give up on the road map for an electoral transition. Renewed civil war could be the direct result. Girardin asked that the U.S. not leave France in the lurch. She stressed French support for U.S. policies in Liberia and Sudan.

¶4. (C) Girardin stated she was prepared, on her own authority, to make a final concession to preclude any interpretation of juridical overreach, namely to substitute the verb "to declare" for "to decide" in Operative Paragraph 4 with reference to the invocation by any Ivoirian, e.g. President Gbagbo, of any unspecified legal provision in order to impede the political process. The UK Ambassador, convoked

immediately beforehand, had suggested the amendment to Girardin, and indicated that the UK could then support the draft. Girardin said the UK did not want an open break with France in the UNSC over Cote d'Ivoire.

15. (C) Should the Ivoirian peace process falter for want of UNSC backing, France would be driven to face hard choices, Girardin observed, particularly with regard to the 4,000 or so French soldiers deployed in Cote d'Ivoire under Operation Licorne. France was entering its own election season, which would be in full swing by January 2007. Faced by civil war in Cote d'Ivoire, the French public would inevitably scrutinize Operation Licorne, criticize it as ineffectual, and question its 250 million euro annual budget given other military commitments, notably in Lebanon. Withdrawal of Operation Licorne would be a real possibility, she feared, and UNOCI would be unable to pick up the slack.

16. (C) Comment: This was the first time the Ambassador has been formally convoked by the French Government during his tenure in France.

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